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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: September 27, 2007

#### No General Right to Stay

1. Austrian Minister of the Interior Günther Platter wants to avoid fixed deadlines that give asylum seekers the right to stay in Austria indefinitely and favors instead the current practice according to which each case is to be examined individually. This is his answer to the discussion about the possibility of granting asylum seekers automatically the right to stay on humanitarian grounds once after they have been in the country for a certain time. Platter's counter-proposal provides for a uniform catalogue of criteria which are to be applied by all provinces. [Die Presse, p. 3]

Centrist daily "Die Presse" lists the criteria that determine whether an asylum seeker is able to remain in Austria on a permanent basis. A right to stay will always be granted to victims of human trafficking, violence in the family, and also to persons who are subject to special personal dangers or plights. In addition, paragraph 8 of the European Human Rights Convention, which provides for the right to family life, has to be taken into account. However, one of these reasons is not sufficient for an automatic right to asylum. The duration of a person's stay in the country is considered, as is the degree of integration. This is one of the most significant changes to the current practice: In the future, mayors will be questioned as to how well the respective persons are integrated into the community. According to Minister Platter's assessment of the situation, there will be no need to grant asylum on humanitarian grounds. Once all the pending cases are resolved and a separate court for asylum cases has been installed, which will happen next year, the procedure will be so short that a permanent right to stay on humanitarian grounds will no longer be an issue, writes the daily.

#### Summing Up the Climate Summit

2. At the climate summit in New York, Californian Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposals for an environmental policy that focuses on innovative approaches to climate change have met with the approval of many heads of state. On Thursday, US President Bush, who did not attend the UN meeting, is starting his own climate summit. Austrian Chancellor Gusenbauer has already voiced criticism of Bush's unilateral approach. [Neue Kronenzeitung, p. 2] Mass circulation tabloid "Neue Kronenzeitung" lauds the UN climate summit on Monday and takes a critical stance on the planned Bush "counter-summit." It notes that representatives of the 16 biggest environmental sinners, which together make for 80 percent of global emissions, were invited to the summit. According to the tabloid, Bush's primary goal, in which he is seconded by China, is to prevent binding commitments and it quotes Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer, who

criticizes the US for its go-it-alone stance on climate change: "Bush has already lost the battle. There is no other way than via the UN. Anything else is only rearguard action." For the Federal Chancellor, the general support for Austrian-born Schwarzenegger at the UN summit has the positive effect that there is now also a heightened interest in Austria's environmental politics. Austrian Press Agency (APA) reports on the meeting between US President Bush and the Austrian Chancellor in New York on Tuesday night, when the latter once again made a case for a joint European-American cooperation with regard to the global climate crisis. According to APA, Gusenbauer pointed out that the international community was now waiting for the US to take the lead in the UN on the climate issue. Gusenbauer also met with former President Bill Clinton and former Vice-President Al Gore.

#### Plassnik Sees Chances for Austrian Seat in Security Council

13. Austrian Minister for European and International Affairs Ursula Plassnik sees good chances for Austria's bid for a seat on the UN Security Council. In reference to Austria's long-standing tradition as a member of the UN and its strong engagement, she does not see any problems. Austria is competing with Turkey in its bid for a non-permanent seat in the highest UN body. [ORF online]

#### Burma's Military Crushes Protests

14. Burma's military has chosen escalation - on Wednesday, soldiers resorted to violence in their attempt to strike down the protest movement. According to various sources, up to eight people were killed and about 100 injured. On Thursday, Buddhist monasteries were raided and about 200 monks were arrested. Worldwide, governments were warning Burma's military regime to show moderation. On the initiative of the British government, an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council took place on Wednesday, however, due to resistance on the part of China, no official condemnation of the bloodshed in Burma could be agreed upon. Instead, there was a lukewarm appeal to the junta to renounce violence. [ORF online, Die Presse, p. 1] All Austrian media report extensively on the explosive situation in Burma, where a dictatorial military regime sees its power threatened by a protest movement led by Buddhist monks. International sanctions against the brutal regime have been in place since the mid-nineties. In 1997, US President Clinton banned weapons deals and investment involving Burma, and the EU imposed milder sanctions in 1996 - they affect also weapons deals, as well as diplomatic relations, technical assistance and business deals on the security sector. As centrist daily "Die Presse" points out, these sanctions have had little effect; after all, China and India did not join in. The value of sanctions is controversial at any rate: The country is still able to export gas and textile goods, particularly to Japan and South Korea. Also, there are critics that object to sanctions on the grounds that they only serve to heighten the country's isolation and give the junta the chance to do whatever it wants, writes independent daily "Der Standard." In the meantime, it is unclear what role China plays with regard to Burma: On the one hand, it acts as protector of the country, which is economically dependent on Beijing, on the other hand, it has every reason to fear chaos in Burma and has called upon the regime to proceed with moderation. Mass circulation daily "Kurier" also points out that Beijing is supposed to have contacts to the Burmese opposition.

#### Bush Wants More Money for War Effort

15. In the coming year, US President George W. Bush intends to spend about a third more than currently on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon announced on Wednesday. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is going to ask Congress to grant him about 190 billion dollars for the coming fiscal year. So far, the White House estimate amounted to 147 billion dollars - if the Pentagon is actually granted the requested funds, 2008 will be the most expensive war year since the US went into Iraq. It is expected that the Congress, which is dominated by Democrats, will use this opportunity to put pressure on the administration with regard to a time frame for troop withdrawal from Iraq. [ORF online]

#### Ways Out of the Dead End

16. Iran's President Mahmud Ahmadinejad has declared the end of the controversy about the Iranian nuclear issue: "The matter is

closed." However, the US and Germany in particular, take a different view. In Washington, the House of Representative has decided on tightening the economic sanctions in case Tehran continues with uranium enrichment. In her speech before the UN, German Chancellor Angela Merkel demanded once again a joint effort of the international community to stop Iran's nuclear ambitions and promised that her country would commit to "further, tighter sanctions," if Iran refuses to yield in the nuclear quarrel. In the meantime, the Vienna-based IAEA has held back with statements concerning Ahmadinejad's announcement. IAEA boss ElBaradei had come under criticism for his recent go-it-alone initiative to work out a plan with Iran separately. According to this plan, all open questions concerning Iran's nuclear program are to be clarified within the next three months - according to the IAEA, if Iran really provides all the necessary information and demonstrates its readiness to make its plans transparent, the crisis could be solved.

In an analysis of the deadlocked situation around the Iranian nuclear issue, centrist daily "Die Presse" publishes exclusively assessments and recommendations of a group of diplomats and experts from the US, EU countries, Switzerland, Saudi-Arabia, Israel and Iran, who convened under the chairmanship of Austrian Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, head of the "Liechtenstein Institute of Self-Determination" at Princeton University. The group has established that Iran presently has about 3,000 centrifuges for uranium enrichment in preparation - one expert estimates that between 2010 and 2015, Iran could be in possession of nuclear weapons. There are various approaches for resolving the conflict: One participant opted for a so-called "cold suspension," allowing Iran to run its centrifuges, but banning the use for uranium enrichment. Another tempting plan provides for the positive settling of the Iranian nuclear issue as a beginning of a complete normalization between Iran and the US. This is an ambitious enterprise - after all, Iran is also involved in Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan. Also, once anti-Americanism, which is one of the pillars of the Islamic Republic, is replaced by opening and dtente, this could be the end of the Iranian theocracy. But perhaps that is just what the West is trying to bring about, speculates the daily. McCaw